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Alhambra High School students sample 'Financial Football' program

More than 25 students from Alhambra High School got a money management lesson Monday outside the classroom, with Arizona Cardinals All Pro wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald and Offensive Rookie of the Year Adrian Peterson playing teacher.

The duo, along with Arizona Treasurer Dean Martin and Visa Inc., kicked off Super Bowl week with a computer learning game for the lucky group.

The game, dubbed "Financial Football," is being distributed Monday by Salt River Project to more than 600 high schools and junior high schools. The goal of the nationwide initiative, now in its 13th year, is to help students tackle their financial futures.

Fitzgerald and Peterson shared their personal experiences of making it big and maintaining their financial control after watching dozens of their peers in the National Football League squander their savings.

"You really have to know how to manage your money," said Peterson, who still is adjusting to a mortgage and multiple car payments. The Minnesota Vikings running back just concluded his rookie campaign after playing three seasons with the University of Oklahoma.

Fitzgerald, who is in contract negotiations with the Cardinals, has made community involvement a priority since arriving in the desert.

"It's important to reach out to youth. It's important to create a good image for them, to be a role model," he said.

He said his father was a frugal guy who stressed financial security, even during Fitzgerald's first job as a ball boy for the Vikings. "You never know when your last play is going to be," he said.

In a state suffering from poor student achievement, Martin said financial literacy is needed.

"Everyone is going to need to balance a checkbook. We need to help improve our curriculum and get this into the classroom," he said.

The game was developed in cooperation with the NFL and Players Inc., a group of active and retired NFL players, along with Visa. The game is the centerpiece of a national financial education initiative that also includes a classroom curriculum. The game also can be downloaded free on cell phones.

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